



PAUL FARROW

STATE REPRESENTATIVE

January 10, 2012

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to speak to you on behalf of Assembly Bill 451. This bill seeks to provide systematic support to the Second Chance Partners for Education program.

Second Chance is a 21-month program that creates partnerships between public education and the business community. Under the program, disengaged students (defined as a student who is severely credit-deficient and in very real jeopardy of not graduating) can have the opportunity to continue their education outside of the school atmosphere under the roof of a sponsoring business.

For a student to be accepted there must be an agreement reached between the student, parents, school district, and Second Chance personnel. To enter the program, the student must be a high school junior. If they maintain the required standards, they will receive both a certified high-school education, and hands-on skilled trade experience. This is a true public-private partnership, attacking a serious problem in our schools and society.

Approximately half the student's time is spent learning a DPI and school-district certified curriculum in a classroom that is housed in a sponsoring company, taught by an accredited teacher. The other half is spent on the shop floor, learning real job skills. This unique combination ultimately helps to provide a workforce-ready potential future employee.

Second Chance **graduates an astounding 90% of their students** (with a high school diploma, not a GED). This greatly exceeds the average state graduation rate of 74%, and the average at-risk graduation rate of just 62%. Most credits are articulated, potentially giving students a jump-start at a technical college.

Currently, there are five Second Chance education centers, which are located in Southeastern Wisconsin. The Green Bay school district has also recently agreed to take part in the program. **Second Chance would like to expand from five schools to 12 schools within the next two years, and expand to areas throughout the state.** This would greatly enhance the annual graduation rate, from 40 students to 112 students.

Since Second Chance only accepts juniors for its program, a new program begins at half strength – said differently; a half-filled classroom absorbs all of the fixed costs associated with educating (mainly classroom infrastructure and teacher's salary).

SERVING WAUKESHA COUNTY'S 98TH ASSEMBLY DISTRICT

This has resulted in a disparity, where Second Chance does the work of educating students, but the districts get paid for it.

Assembly Bill 451 proposes a change to the funding formula so that Second Chance compensation better-reflects the true cost of educating, while at the same time ensuring the school district is still compensated for administration costs. Currently Second Chance receives a \$4610 per pupil revenue share from the contracting partner districts. Under this bill, DPI is required to pay Second Chance at the rate paid per pupil to independent charter schools. This increase will help Second Chance and the host company to cover the cost of educating the students without additional negotiations.

The host company will be paying a portion of the cost as well as providing a wage to the students when they are working.

We have seen legislation introduced and passed to give business incentives to create more jobs and to provide alternatives for students to succeed. Second Chance Partners in Education gives us both in one package. Private business is partnering to change the future of these students.

Thank you for your time and I look forward to answering your questions.

###

Dear Prospective Business Partner,

My name is Brandon Curnow. I am a senior in the Second Chance program. Previously I attended Muskego High School. I feel pretty good about my future right now. I feel that when I complete the Second Chance program I will be better qualified for many different job opportunities. In addition, I also have good job experience. Back when I was still in high school there was probably no way that I was ever going to amount to anything in life. All I did in high school was screw around and not do what I was supposed to. I would either just fall asleep for the whole class period or I would just not show up to class at all.

Now that I am in Second Chance, I think that the learning environment is much better. You only have 1 teacher, which is pretty nice because that means that the teacher actually knows a little bit more about your learning skills and they spend more time making sure that you learn the stuff the right way. I also only go to school for 2 ½ hours, so now I go to school every day because it's not hard at all. I have also gained a good work ethic. If I hadn't worked at the places I've worked at so far, I probably would still be a slacker. That's the part of the program I like the most. You get to go out into the real world and actually experience it rather than just sitting in a desk for 7 straight hours learning about stuff that you're never actually going to have to use. I also have improved my communication skills as a result of working in the business environment.

I think that if I would have stayed in high school I would probably live in my parent's house until I was I got my life together. Now that I am almost done with SC, I appreciate the awesome opportunity I have been given. I think that this program should be state-wide.

Thank you,

Brandon Curnow